



**Iowa WIC Program**

# **Grocery Vendor Application Guidance**

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Iowa Department of Public Health  
Bureau of Nutrition & Health Promotion  
321 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street  
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*Promoting and Protecting the Health of Iowans*

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# Iowa WIC Program

## Overview

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### Purpose

The purpose of this application guidance is to provide information to potential retailers who have interest in being an authorized WIC vendor. To be authorized to accept WIC food instruments, a retailer must have a signed agreement with the Iowa WIC Program. A vendor may begin to accept WIC food instruments only after an agreement has been signed and all store associates who will be handling WIC food instruments have been trained. Agreements must be renewed every three years.

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# Overview of the Iowa WIC Program

<b>What is WIC?</b>	WIC, (the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children), is a nutrition program for women, infants and children. The U.S. Congress established WIC in 1973 in recognition of the need for adequate nutrition during pregnancy and early childhood, especially among limited income families. The Iowa WIC Program provides nutrition education, breastfeeding support, supplemental foods, and referrals for health services to approximately 70,000 individuals per month.
<b>Who is eligible for WIC?</b>	WIC services are available to women who are pregnant or who recently had a baby, infants and children up to the age of five. Participants must meet income eligibility criteria (less than 185 percent of the federal poverty guidelines), must be a resident of Iowa, and be determined as having a nutrition need by a licensed dietitian.
<b>How is WIC funded?</b>	The Iowa WIC Program is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture through the Iowa Department of Public Health, Bureau of Nutrition & Health Promotion.
<b>What is my role as a grocery vendor?</b>	Approved WIC vendors enable WIC participants to redeem their food instruments for nutritious foods. By completing this application, you are agreeing to follow state and federal WIC regulations as outlined in the WIC Vendor Agreement booklet. Prices charged to WIC participants must be equal or less than the prices charged to all other customers.
<b>Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT)</b>	Iowa uses the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) eWIC card for participant benefits. It is important for the WIC Program to have the ability to communicate with vendors via e-mail/electronic communication.

# Selection Criteria for WIC Vendors

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## General business requirements

A WIC vendor must:

- Maintain regular business hours. This shall include a minimum of two, four-hour blocks of time on each of five days per week. Daily operating hours shall be consistent from week to week, and shall be posted.
  - Not have had a Food Assistance (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) disqualification or civil monetary penalty imposed within the 12 months preceding the date of the application.
  - Not have received a WIC program disqualification or a WIC application denied within the six-month period preceding the date of the application.
  - Not have had a conviction or civil judgment entered against them during the last six years for any activity indicating a lack of business integrity.
  - Have a current State of Iowa Food Establishment License.
  - Stock the varieties and minimum quantities of WIC approved foods.
  - Meet inventory requirements that are listed in the Grocery Vendors Application Guidance Form.
  - Not realize nor expect to realize more than 50 percent of its annual revenue from the sale of food items that are obtained with WIC food instruments.
  - Consistently identify WIC product using shelf labels that meet the following criteria and meet price points:
    - Product Description indicating brand/company name, and product description,
    - Selling unit size (indicating ounces, pounds, container and sleeve/pack
    - Selling unit retail
    - Signage dimensions – block lettering. Tags will measure no less than 2 inches by 1 inch, and
    - Price Point font no less than 48 font.
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## WIC participant access

Vendors will also be selected based on access to WIC participants. Specifically:

- If at all possible, at least one vendor contract will be maintained in rural counties where a WIC clinic is located.

**Note:** The Iowa WIC Program does not limit the number of vendors who may participate in the agency service area.

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## Adherence to WIC regulations

Retailers who apply for a WIC contract indicate their intent to comply with **ALL** WIC regulations as outlined in this application packet and in the Iowa Administrative Code (IAC) Chapter 73. This includes prices charged to WIC participants must be equal to or less than those charged to all other customers. Retailers must be competitively priced.

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## Selection Criteria for WIC Vendors, Continued

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### Grocery vendors

Grocery vendors must meet the following WIC selection criteria:

- The vendor must be a primary retailer of groceries rather than of other merchandise. A grocery vendor is defined as a business which stocks **ALL** of the following items:
    - Fresh produce (must have a minimum of five linear feet of refrigerated display space). Inventory requirement – 10 varieties of fresh fruits and 10 varieties of fresh vegetables.
    - Fresh or frozen meats and poultry (must have a minimum of twelve linear feet of fresh or frozen unbreaded meat, pre-packaged luncheon meats do not qualify). Inventory requirement – 5 chicken, 5 beef, and 5 pork fresh varieties. Stores may substitute 5 lamb for pork.
    - Canned and frozen vegetables
    - Dairy products
    - Cereals and bread
  - No more than 20 percent of the retailer's gross retail sales may be from the sale of gasoline or other automotive supplies.
  - No more than 20 percent of the retailer's gross retail sales may be from the sale of alcoholic beverages and tobacco products.
  - No more than 50 percent of the retailer's gross retail food sales may be from the sale of authorized WIC food items.
  - WIC-authorized vendors are required to only purchase formula from a list maintained by the state WIC program, which includes State-licensed wholesalers, distributors, retailers, and infant formula manufacturers registered with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).
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## Inventory Requirements

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**WIC-  
approved  
food list**

The specific brands of products that are included on the WIC Approved Food List shall be made available to the retailer at the time of application and prior to renewal of each agreement. The department reserves the right to disqualify brands that significantly exceed the average price of other brands.

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**Minimum stock  
requirements**

The grocery vendor must stock the varieties and minimum quantities of WIC approved foods as listed on the current WIC approved food list. The minimum requirements include the list on the following page.

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**Minimum  
stock  
requirements**

Item	Minimum quantity
Cereal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cold, ready-to-eat cereals</li> <li>Hot cereal</li> </ul>	10 boxes - Two (2) boxes of five (5) approved varieties – of the five (5) approved varieties, three (3) varieties must be whole grain)
100% Whole Wheat Bread	Four (4) 16 ounce loaves approved 100% whole wheat bread
Brown Rice	Two (2) 14-16 oz instant/Boil in Bag approved brown rice
Juice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>64 ounce shelf stable 100 percent fruit or vegetable juice</li> <li>12 ounce concentrated 100 percent fruit juice. Single flavor only.</li> </ul>	Fifteen (15) 64-ounce containers of at least three (3) approved varieties  Ten (10) 12-ounce containers of at least two (2) approved varieties.
Dairy Products <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whole Vitamin A and D fortified fluid milk</li> <li>Low-fat or fat-free fluid, Vitamin A and D fortified milk</li> <li>Approved varieties of cheese</li> </ul>	4 gallons whole milk  4 gallons low-fat or fat free  2 pounds of 2 different varieties weighing 8 or 16 ounces each
Edible dried beans or peas	Two (2) 1-pound bags, any variety
Peanut butter	2 approved containers 18-ounce size or less, of 100 percent peanut butter
Eggs (Grade A)	5 dozen large fresh eggs, white or brown
Fish	8 containers of tuna, 5-ounce minimum size 8 containers of salmon, 5 ounce minimum size
Formula	Twenty-four (24) 13-ounce cans of any current rebate contract concentrated formula, or 6 cans of any current rebate contract powdered formula
Infant cereal	Twenty-four (24) ounces of at least two (2) varieties of WIC approved dry infant cereal (infant cereal with at least 45% of the Daily Value for Iron per serving)
Baby Food (Fruits and Vegetables)	Fifty (50) 4-ounce containers of at least five (5) approved varieties (single ingredient or blends)
Baby Meats	Ten (10) 2.5-ounce containers of single ingredient meats of at least 2 approved varieties (single ingredient)
Fruits and Vegetables	Ten (10) varieties of fresh fruits and vegetables each Two (2) varieties of frozen fruits and vegetables each

Note: The variety and quantity in stock are defined as including both inventory on display and on-premises storage, but not inventory on order from suppliers.

# Application Process

<b>Directions</b>	<p>The information in this written application must be completed fully and accurately. The application must be received within 60 days of the initial request for an application. Failure to do so will result in the application being denied.</p> <p>Completed applications shall be mailed or faxed to the Iowa Department of Public Health, Bureau of Nutrition &amp; Health Promotion, 321 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street, Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0075, fax (515) 281-4913.</p> <p>All faxed applications must be accompanied by the original application mailed to the Iowa Department of Public Health.</p>
<b>Application review</b>	<p>New vendor applications may be submitted at any time during the year. The Department will review each application within five working days of receipt and determine whether the retail outlet meets the selection criteria in the Iowa Administrative Code Chapter 73. The Department may, at its discretion; request a retailer to resubmit an application prior to completing the review if the application is incomplete and determination of eligibility cannot be made.</p> <p>If the application shows that the retailer does not meet one or more of the selection criteria, the Department shall deny the application. If the retailer's application indicates that the retailer would qualify, the Department shall make an on-site visit to verify the information in the application is accurate.</p>
<b>On-site visit</b>	<p>Department staff will contact the retailer to make an appointment for an on-site review. During this visit they will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Verify the information contained in the application,</li><li>• Explain the Iowa WIC Program regulations that vendors must follow, and</li><li>• Provide training.</li></ul> <p>The manager and person responsible for store associate training must allow time at this appointment for training to be completed, approximately 60 minutes.</p>
<b>WIC Vendor Agreement</b>	<p>Upon the submission of a complete application and a successful on-site visit, the Department and the retailer will sign the WIC Vendor Agreement. Once the agreement is executed, an authorized vendor stamp will be provided with a WIC identification number.</p> <p><u>Note:</u> Retailers are not authorized to accept WIC food instruments until the Vendor and the Department sign a WIC Vendor Agreement.</p>

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## Application Process, Continued

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### Denied applications

If the Department determines during the application review or the on-site visit that the retailer does not qualify, the WIC Vendor Agreement will not be signed. Within five working days of denying an agreement, the Department will advise the retailer in writing of the reasons for denial and the procedure for appeal.

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### Non-discrimination statement

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form](#), (AD-3027) found online at: [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html), and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- (1) Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) Fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) Email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

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### Re-application

If a WIC Vendor Agreement is denied, the retailer must wait 6 months before submitting a new application.

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## Application Process, Continued

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**Length of WIC Vendor Agreement**

Vendors must complete a new application and sign a new WIC Vendor Agreement every three years to continue accepting WIC food instruments. The WIC Vendor Agreement will expire when:

- The date specified in the WIC Vendor Agreement is reached,
- Ownership of the business named in the WIC Vendor Agreement changes,
- The vendor ceases operation, or
- The WIC Vendor Agreement is terminated for program violations.

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**Multiple retail locations**

Retailers must submit separate applications if applying for more than one business or location. A store representative who has legal authority to obligate the retailer must sign the WIC Vendor Agreement.

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**Contact information**

The Iowa WIC Program vendor staff may be contacted at:

Iowa Department of Public Health  
Bureau of Nutrition & Health Promotion  
321 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street  
Des Moines, Iowa 50319  
Phone: 515.281.6650 Fax: 515.281.4913  
Website: <http://idph.iowa.gov/wic>

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# Reauthorization

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**Expiration of the agreement**

A vendor may not continue accepting WIC food instruments past the expiration date of the WIC Vendor Agreement.

All vendors must complete a new application to qualify for a new WIC Vendor Agreement at the end of the contract period.

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**Denial of new agreement**

The Department will not offer a new agreement if **ANY** of the following conditions apply:

- The selection criteria are no longer being met;
  - The vendor has been assessed more than 60 violation points under the IAC paragraph 73.19(2)“b” within the previous 24 months;
  - The vendor has failed to submit any of the requested Price Assessment Reports in the previous contract period; or
  - The vendor has not cashed any WIC food instruments for at least two consecutive months at anytime during the contract period, or has not cashed five or more WIC food instruments for any 120-day period during the contract period.
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**Denial exception**

**A vendor may not be denied the offer of a new agreement if it would result in inadequate participant access.**

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**Change of ownership**

If ownership of an authorized vendor changes during the agreement period, the WIC Vendor Agreement becomes void. The new owner must file an application and be approved prior to accepting WIC food instruments.

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**Notification**

Vendors with a current WIC Vendor Agreement will be sent an application for reauthorization approximately six months prior to the expiration of their current agreement. Notification of acceptance or denial of the new application will be made at least 30 days prior to the expiration of the current contract.

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